

The following interview was recorded between Lt Colonel Pittman and Lt Colonel Catledge on 22 November 1955.

L/C PITTMAN: Please state your name, rank and organization.

L/C CATLEDGE: Lt Colonel Richard C. Catledge, Headquarters, Great TAF.

L/C P: Would you just tell me what you know about the time and weather conditions where you were flying on 17 November when the C-54 was reported missing.

L/C C: Yes. This wall map can be used as a reference. Of course, I knew nothing about this accident. It happened to be that I was up on a local flight between 0800 and 0900 on the morning of 17 November. We had a broken condition at 0800 and it began to close in by 0900. There was a rather large hole to the west of Las Vegas proper. I let down on a westerly heading through this hole to an indicated altitude of about 6000 feet which put me about 500 feet below the clouds. I made a right turn just about inside the foothills of Mount Charleston and I can remember that looking back into here.

L/C P: You mean back north towards Indian Springs?

L/C C: Yes, back towards the northwest that the ceiling here was pretty much constant at 6500 indicated. Of course, the terrain rises back in there. But I maintained 6000 feet on back into the base with no trouble at all.

L/C P: About how much below the clouds were you then?

L/C C: Well, I would say 500 to 1000 feet after I had completed my turn back towards the field.

L/C P: How close were you to Mount Charleston? About what was the closest you actually came to Mount Charleston?

L/C C: Well, what is our scale here. I must have been within three or four miles of Madre Mountains.

L/C P: Did it appear the clouds were any higher towards the mountains, do you recall?

L/C C: No, there seemed to be a fairly level ceiling. And I believe, if you'd like to check with some of the training squadrons around here, that most of the airplanes were flying that first mission that it rained up here around Indian Springs, and I'm sure that a lot of them were coming back through this pass here between 0830 and 0900.

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L/C P: I understood that they weren't having any training at all that morning because of the bad weather.

L/C C: The first mission got off.

L/C P: The first mission did. Well, I was told that they didn't get off until later when they found a hole. Late in the afternoon actually. One did get off in the morning, you're positive.

L/C C: Well, you can check the local log and see how many left. I can't say how many got off. I saw at least six flights of aircraft while I was airborne between 0800 and 0900.

L/C P: Were they all out on strictly ground gunnery?

L/C C: I don't know what the mission was, but some of them were going. I could see them down through the broken clouds, going up in this direction towards Indian Springs. I assume that some of them were up using the ground gunnery ranges because it doesn't take too much of a ceiling.

L/C P: You were on a local flight out of here.

L/C C: Yes, I took off at 0800 and landed at 0900.

L/C P: You didn't see anything else at any time during your flight that would add to the accident.

L/C C: No. I knew nothing about it until the following day.

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